

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the period for morning business be extended until 2:30 with the time equally divided, with Senators allowed to speak for 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, with reference to the previously proposed unanimous consent request, I ask unanimous consent that the time be divided equally on the quorum call.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CIVIL RIGHTS

Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I first want to offer a few comments about the very important birthday of the greatest civil rights leader of our time, Dr. Martin Luther King, and give some thoughts about the issue of civil rights and our commitment to equal opportunities for all Americans.

Obviously, we need to continue to fight to protect the rights of all Americans by supporting and ensuring full implementation of the antidiscrimination laws. But we also need to ensure that programs designed to create equal opportunity for all groups and for all individuals in our society in critical areas such as education and health care are fully implemented.

I believe an important test of our commitment to equality is an examination of the broader policy choices

we make and the priorities we set as we allocate Federal dollars.

We have heard a great deal from the administration, and continue to, about their championing of minorities and the disadvantaged. But, unfortunately, there seems to me to be a pattern of shortchanging the programs and the policy initiatives that are most meaningful to those very groups, at least those groups as I visit with them in my home State.

In the context of education—which the Presiding Officer is extremely well versed in—the administration's position has embraced the Children's Defense Fund slogan, which is: We Should Leave No Child Behind.

Last Congress, on a bipartisan basis, we enacted the No Child Left Behind Act which, for the first time, demands that our educational system demonstrate progress for all children by closing existing achievement gaps. I believe the accountability provisions in that law can have a revolutionary impact on our educational system and can bring us a great distance toward ensuring equal educational opportunities for all children.

But we need to back up these mandates and these requirements by working in partnership with State and local governments to provide the resources the schools and the teachers need to help all of our children to succeed. And I do not believe we have seen a real commitment to do that from this administration.

The pending fiscal year 2003 budget, which we are getting ready to debate, even as soon as this afternoon, underfunds the No Child Left Behind Act by \$7 billion. The President included a small increase from the title I program—the program targeted to districts and schools with large numbers of disadvantaged students—but even with this increase, the program remains underfunded by \$5 billion. The proposed funding level will not be sufficient to keep pace with the growth in child poverty. It will mean over 6 million poor children will be left behind.

In addition, the President's budget zero funds programs that are targeted at assisting minority groups. One of those is the dropout prevention program which we wrote into that law.

The dropout rate for Hispanic students in this country is almost three times that for non-Hispanic white students. Most recent data—1999 through 2000—shows a dropout rate among white non-Hispanic students of 10 percent; among Hispanic students, just over 27 percent. These children are being left behind. Yet despite bipartisan agreement during the negotiations on the No Child Left Behind Act to include this program, to include this initiative at the Federal level, to assist with dropout prevention efforts in our high schools and in our middle schools, the administration has proposed zero funding for the program. They propose zero funding in the 2003 fiscal year budget, which we are going to be debat-

ing later today or tomorrow; and I fear they may propose zero funding for the dropout prevention program in the new budget we see at the beginning of February.

The refusal to fund this program is an even greater problem in light of the new focus on student performance and assessment. The increased focus on assessments has led many to fear dropout rates will increase as States strive to meet their academic performance goals. There is a danger that kids who are not doing well on tests will be the ones most likely to drop out. We tried to address the issue by including a provision in the new law that requires schools to show that increased test scores do not come at the expense of increased dropout rates. But the administration's recent regulations interpreting the new law gut this protection by allowing schools to claim progress even if dropout rates for some groups increase.

If we truly intend to leave no child behind—and I do believe there was good faith in the effort to put this bill together—educational funding, particularly funding for programs such as this I have just discussed that are targeted toward the most disadvantaged children—and this includes a disproportionately large number of minorities—these programs need to be our top priority, not our lowest priority.

We also see misconceived priorities in the area of health care. The Institute of Medicine at the National Academy of Sciences said in a report they issued.

[A] large body of published research reveals that racial and ethnic minorities experience a lower quality of health services, and are less likely to receive even routine medical procedures than are white Americans.

One of the number of recommendations the report made—and has been ignored, thus far, by the administration—is the recommendation to ensure public health care payors—that means Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program, specifically—that the health beneficiaries of those programs are brought to the same level in their benefits as those who get their benefits through the private sector.

In the area of providing coverage to low-income pregnant women, the administration first supported and then turned its back on a bipartisan approach to cover low-income pregnant women with access to the full array of prenatal, delivery, and postpartum care that is typical in the private sector. This bipartisan effort—Senator BOND was very involved in this, as were other Senators on both the Republican side and Democratic side—the bipartisan effort would improve the outcomes of deliveries for both pregnant women and their children, particularly among racial and ethnic minorities who are disproportionately enrolled in these public sector programs.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC, African